

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Higbee, Inc.

New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Higbee, Inc. Achieves Record Sales Through Lean Initiative

Client Profile:

Higbee, Inc. is a manufacturer of gaskets and sealing products for the heating, ventilation, air conditioning/refrigeration (HVAC/R), automotive, lighting, and pump and valve industries. The company was founded as Higbee Rubber Company in 1932 to sell flexible couplings, hosing, molded parts, boots, and foul weather gear. In 1940, the company shifted its focus to gasket production. The name of the company was changed to Higbee, Inc. in 1996. Higbee, Inc. currently has 50 employees, annual sales of over \$7 million, and a 48,000 square foot facility.

Situation:

Higbee, Inc.'s managers wanted to develop an efficient product development change process that could easily be supported by all manufacturing groups. They wanted to implement a lean manufacturing strategy to improve productivity and reduce costs, enabling Higbee to more effectively compete in a global market. The company asked the New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NYMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to assist.

Solution:

NYMEP conducted lean manufacturing workshops to bring all Higbee employees to the same level of familiarity with lean concepts. A second set of NYMEP workshops focused specifically on employee involvement and the elements of effective team building. Upon completion of the workshops, Higbee formed three production teams and one business process team. The process teams conducted workplace organization and value stream mapping exercises to develop a new plant layout, effectively freeing 25 percent of existing floor space to create room for three new machines. The plant re-arrangement included the removal of interior walls that inhibited material flow and the relocation of equipment to improve process flow. NYMEP led exercises to help employees reduce set-up times on the relocated equipment, while the business process team eliminated waste on the administrative side by establishing effective, efficient, and accurate communication and documentation of internal and external customer requests.

Results:

Increased profits by 450 percent.

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Increased sales per production employee by 37 percent.

Increased jobs run per employee by 31 percent.

Increased parts shipped per employee by 23 percent.

Obtained a new contract that is expected to increase sales by 15 percent in 2003.

Testimonial:

,